

So, Mr. President, perhaps I am just venting frustration, but I believe a lot of others share those frustrations. I hope that in some way I am representing the frustrations of the farmers I represent, because they are frustrated. They do not know what to expect. They would like to have a little certainty, too. Right now, all we are giving them is uncertainty. If we adjourn for a month tonight, they have another month of uncertainty. It is unfair and unconscionable that we would walk out of this place tonight and adjourn without having a full, fair, and open debate on amendments to a farm bill, which cannot take place in 3 hours tonight. It may take tomorrow and it might take Monday. That is fair. I do not know how many days the 1990 farm bill took. I am informed that it took 7 days. The 1985 farm bill took about the same amount of time. We had the telecom bill. How many days did that take? I think a couple of weeks. The farm bill is every bit as important to our farmers as the telecom bill is to the people in telecommunications. I do not think the farm bill needs 7 days, but at least 2 or 3 days, to debate and amend it and have final passage. I do not see why we cannot do that tomorrow, Monday, and Tuesday. There is no reason we cannot do it.

I yield the floor.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for approximately 5 minutes on the matter of the agricultural bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I have listened to my distinguished colleague from the neighboring State of Iowa. I want to share with the Senate the fact that my frustrations run very deep, as deep as so eloquently expressed by my colleague from the State of Iowa, Senator HARKIN.

Here we are, Mr. President, 10 minutes after 7:00 on the 1st day of February, and there is rapid talk in this body about adjourning this evening until sometime around February 28. Now, obviously, adjourning here without taking any action whatever on a farm bill is not only wrong, it is not only bad policy, but it is ridiculous.

How do we work ourselves out of the dilemma we find ourselves in right now? Mr. President, it would seem to me that it would be a time for cooler heads to prevail. I think we have two basic options: Either we stay here and

work and not adjourn, as has been contemplated, and I suspect that would be the best possible course of action of all the options that we have; or the second option, it seems to me, would be if we are going to adjourn tonight, and if we adjourn I suspect we will have a roll-call vote on adjournment so that we will all know in this body and elsewhere as to who wanted to adjourn when we have important work that we should remain here doing. The other option of not staying here, if we are bound and determined to adjourn, which I will oppose, but if that happens, we are going to leave here without any resolution whatever on the farm bill, would be the worse of all possible worlds. If we are not going to continue to stay here and work and hammer out a compromise of some kind, then I think the next best option would be for a simple 1-year extension of the present farm bill.

The only significant changes that I suggest that we should make in that regard is to accept and provide a simplification of the rules, regulations, and red tape, and truly allow the farmers of America, for the most part, to farm for the 1996 year without all of the complicated restraints that they have. I simply say the simplification of the rules and allowing the farmers more freedom is one part of the Freedom to Farm Act that I generally have supported.

I hope that all would realize and recognize that we either have the option of trying to work out something tonight, which I think is going to be extremely difficult. If we cannot do that, I think we should schedule to be here tomorrow and Saturday, if necessary, and again next week, in an effort to try and come to some kind of a workable compromise that can get the required number of votes, and/or tonight stand to face reality and say it is going to be very difficult to come to some kind of an agreement. Probably the best thing for all sides to do would simply be to recognize and realize that the best thing to do under the circumstances in consideration to the farmers of America, who are anxiously awaiting what we are going to do here with regard to a farm bill, is to have a 1-year extension of the present farm bill with the caveats I have just expressed.

Mr. President, it seems to me, therefore, we once again are up against time constraints—some of them real, some of them imaginary. By and large, I see no reason why we should be adjourning when we should be here working. If adjournment is the way we are going to go, I appeal for all sides to realize and recognize, in the interests of agriculture, while extending the present farm bill for 1 year is not the way I would like to go, it may be the only way for us to go and provide a measure of assurance to the food producers of America that we do, indeed, care and appreciate what they are going through.

Here we are in February talking about a farm bill that should have been

passed no later than the beginning of the new fiscal year last October 1. Here we are, Mr. President, as the ranking Democrat on the Budget Committee, starting to make plans for the budget discussions in 1996, and we have not even finished the budget from last year. We are sadly behind what we should be doing—doing it right or wrong.

I think that, by and large, most of the minority, and I hope a large portion of the majority, in the Senate would realize it is time to fish or cut bait. If we cannot come to an agreement, I suggest it would make sense and be reasonable for all sides to agree to an extension of 1 year, with the caveats I have outlined.

FEDERAL TEA TASTERS REPEAL ACT OF 1996

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of calendar 306, S. 1518.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1518) to eliminate the Board of Tea Experts by prohibiting funding for the Board and by repealing the Tea Importation Act of 1897.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. DOLE. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be deemed read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements be placed at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

So the bill (S. 1518) was deemed read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 1518

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Federal Tea Tasters Repeal Act of 1996".

SEC. 2. PROHIBITION OF FUNDING.

None of the funds appropriated or made available to the Federal Drug Administration shall be used to operate the Board of Tea Experts and related activities.

SEC. 3. REPEAL OF TEA IMPORTATION ACT OF 1897.

The Tea Importation Act (21 U.S.C. 41 et seq.) is repealed.

SEC. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

AWARDING THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL TO RUTH AND BILLY GRAHAM

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 2657 just received from the House.